GHOST RIDER

JOHNNY BLAZE IS CURSED, DOOMED TO LIVE LIFE AS THE GHOST RIDER, A BRUTAL SPIRIT THAT EXISTS ONLY TO METE OUT VENGEANCE AGAINST EVILDOERS. AFTER YEARS SPENT BEING A PAWN OF HELL, BLAZE HAS RECENTLY LEARNED THAT THE GHOST RIDER IS ACTUALLY A WEAPON OF HEAVEN, BONDED TO HIM BY THE RENEGADE ANGEL ZADKIEL. AT LONG LAST, BLAZE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR RUINING HIS LIFE. BUT THE ONLY QUESTION IS, HOW DOES HE GET REVENGE ON AN ANGEL?

THE WAR AGAINST ZADKIEL HAS TAKEN A SHOCKING TURN. ZADKIEL HAS WON. HIS ARMIES HAVE CONQUERED HEAVEN AND ALL HOPE IS SEEMINGLY LOST. IN THE WAKE OF THEIR DEFEAT, BLAZE AND HIS COHORTS HAVE GONE THEIR SEPARATE WAYS.

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IT STARTED WITH THE *FLOOD*.
GOD LOOKED DOWN AT THE EARTH AND SAW THAT THE *WICKEDNESS* OF MAN WAS GREAT, SO HE SENT THE RAINS AND WASHED *EVERYONE* AWAY.

AFTER THE WATERS HAD SUBSIDED, GOD PUT A RAINBOW IN THE SKY AS A PROMISE TO THE FEW SURVIVORS THAT HE WOULD *NEVER* AGAIN SMITE EVERY LIVING THING ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

YET DESPITE GOD'S EFFORTS, HUMANITY'S CAPACITY FOR DEPRAVITY REMAINED UNCHANGED.
RAINBOW OR NO RAINBOW, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE KEPT IN CHECK.

THUS THE *SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE* WERE BORN.

THE SPIRITS WERE A VESTIGE OF GOD'S OWN POWER, BONDED TO *HUMAN* HOSTS. AND IN CHARGE OF THEM WAS PLACED THE TRUSTED ARCHANGEL, *ZADKIEL*.
ZADKIEL'S JOB WAS TO OVERSEE THE SPIRITS, TO MANIPULATE THEM FROM THE SHADOWS, MAKING SURE THEIR TRUE ORIGINS STAYED SHROUDED IN MYSTERY AND THAT GOD'S NAME REMAINED OFF THE BOOKS.
TOGETHER, THEY WERE THE C.I.A. OF THE AFTERLIFE.
HEAVEN'S *BLACK OPS*.
THE JOB OF THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE WAS MERELY TO *FIGHT*, TO AVENGE THE INNOCENT AND PRUNE MANKIND OF ITS UNDESIRABLES.
FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THAT SAME WAR HAS RAGED, WITHOUT EVER A SIGNIFICANT TURN IN THE TIDE OF BATTLE.
UNTIL NOW.
AS WE STAND HERE TODAY, THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE ARE NO MORE, AND THEIR BATTLE TO PRESERVE THE SANCTITY OF HEAVEN?

Trials & Tribulations

PART 1: ONCE WERE GHOST RIDERS

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MY GRANDFATHER WAS ONE OF THE FIRST CASUALTIES IN THAT WAR.
MA'AM?
WE CAN BEGIN THE BURIAL ANY TIME.
WHEN HE DIED, HIS MANTLE PASSED TO ME. I'M THE LAST OF THE CARETAKERS NOW.
LAST IN A LINE OF MORTALS WHO'VE WORKED FOR CENTURIES TO AID THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE AND TO CARRY OUT THE WILL OF GOD HERE ON EARTH.
THE POLICE HAD YOUR GRANDFATHER LISTED AS A JOHN DOE. WHAT NAME SHOULD WE PUT ON THE TOMBSTONE?
SO WHAT NOW, NOW THAT THE SPIRITS HAVE FAILED AND HEAVEN HAS FALLEN?
CARETAKER.
JUST PUT CARETAKER.
WHAT NOW?

IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. ONCE UPON A TIME, THE SPIRITS WERE A GREAT FORCE FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD.
EVEN BACK BEFORE THIS WAS AMERICA, WE HAD A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE PROTECTING THE SHORES.

IN THE 17TH CENTURY, THE PURITAN AVENGER *NOBLE KALE* RODE THE BACKWOODS OF THE COLONIES, CHASING DOWN WITCHES AND OVERZEALOUS WITCHHUNTERS ALIKE.
IN THEIR FRIGHTENED WHISPERS, THEY DUBBED HIM THE *GHOST RIDER*.

IN THE DAYS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, AN EX-SLAVE NAMED *CALEB* SOLD HIS SOUL TO AVENGE HIS FAMILY, AND THE GHOST RIDER RODE ONCE AGAIN.

AND IT WASN'T JUST CALEB'S FAMILY THAT NEEDED AVENGING BACK IN THOSE DAYS EITHER...
LOOKIE THERE, BOYS. I RECKON WE GOT US ABOUT $600 IN *BOUNTIES* A'COMIN' FOR THEM THERE *SCALPS*.

WHO WOULDA GUESSED THAT A BUNCH A' HALF-GROWN PUPS AND WITHERED OLD SQUAWS COULD BE SO *VALUABLE?*
HAW! HAHAHA! HAAAAAAW!

WHERE EVER THERE WAS A THIRST FOR VENGEANCE ON AMERICAN SOIL...
URK
THWIP

THERE YOU'D FIND THE GHOST RIDER.
YI-YI-YI-YI

WHEN AMERICANS NEEDED AVENGING OVERSEAS, THE GHOST RIDER WAS *THERE* AS WELL.
IN THE SKIES ABOVE GERMANY IN WORLD WAR I...
COME ALONG, YOU PRUSSIAN NANCIES! *THE GHOST FLYER* THIRSTS FOR LUFTWAFFE BLOOD!
AND IN THE MUD OF NORTH AFRICA AND THE RHINELAND DURING WORLD WAR II.
LOAD UP ANOTHER HELLFIRE SHELL, BOYS! WE GOT *PANZERS* AT 12 O'CLOCK!

WHERE EVER THERE WERE EVIL MEN WITH A HUNGER FOR SIN...
ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN, THE SKIN AND BONES CLUB IS NOW IN SESSION.
LAST ONE TO CARVE OUT AN INTERNAL ORGAN BUYS THE FIRST ROUND OF BRANDY.
WHERE EVER MURDER WAS A WAY OF LIFE...
THERE YOU'D FIND THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
SMASH
HANDS OFF THE OKIE, BOYS!
HOLY HELL! IT'S THE *UNDEAD G-MAN!*
AND DON'T FORGET *KNUCKLES O'SHAUGNESSY!* YOUSE MUGS IS IN FOR IT NOW!
FILL 'EM FULLA DAYLIGHT, BIG G!
BUT THAT WAS THEN...

NOW THERE'S NOBODY LEFT TO TURN TO.
EXCEPT MAYBE GOD.
BUT WHO EVEN KNOWS ABOUT THAT ANYMORE?
Sacred Heart Convent For The Sisters Of The Holy Sepulcher
GUESS THAT'S WHY I FIND MYSELF COMING BACK HOME.
MOTHER SUPERIOR, HELLO?
MOTHER SUPERIOR WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO. MOTHER SUPERIOR ALWAYS KNOWS WHAT TO DO.
THOUGH HEAVEN ITSELF MAY HAVE FALLEN...
SOME THINGS WILL SURELY NEVER CHANGE.
HELLO, ANYBODY...

OH MY GOD... NO...
NO NO NO...
NO, THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING...
UUHHHH

MOTHER SUPERIOR!
SARA... SARA, IS THAT YOU?
OH GOD, MOTHER SUPERIOR...
KNEW YOU'D COME BACK...
ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE SOMETHING SPECIAL... EVER SINCE THAT DAY THEY FIRST BROUGHT YOU HERE...
MOTHER SUPERIOR, EVERYONE'S... WHAT HAPPENED?
HE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE. STRONG AS AN OX. GOD HELP US, HE WAS STRONG.
DIDN'T SAY WHY HE'D COME. DIDN'T SAY MUCH AT ALL.
"JUST SHOUTED SOMETHING ABOUT THE WHORES OF BABYLON AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION...
"AND THEN HE TOOK OUT HIS KNIVES..

"AND SET ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.
"CALLED HIMSELF *THE DEACON*, BUT HE FOUGHT LIKE THE DEVIL.
"WE DID OUR BEST. ALL MY GIRLS, THEY FOUGHT THEIR BLESSED HEARTS OUT JUST LIKE I ALWAYS TRAINED THEM TO.
"BUT HE WAS SO STRONG.
"AND GOD...
"GOD JUST WASN'T HEEDING OUR PRAYERS THAT DAY."

I'M SO SORRY, OH GOD, THIS IS ALL MY FAULT. THEY DID THIS TO GET BACK AT ME.
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED IN HEAVEN, SARA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT, BUT I CAN FEEL IT. MAYBE THIS REALLY IS THE END TIMES.
WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL. I HAVE A BIKE, WE CAN--
MY GIRLS ARE ALL WAITING FOR ME. I HEAR THEM...SAYING SOMETHING... ABOUT ANGELS.
THE ANGELS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM. DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE TO YOU?
JUST HOLD ON! PLEASE...
SARA... DON'T LET THE FIRE DIE... IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY NOW...
DON'T LET IT...GO OUT...
WHERE EVER GOOD PEOPLE SUFFERED...
WHERE YOU COULD LOOK IN THEIR EYES AND SEE THEM THIRSTING FOR VENGEANCE...

THAT'S WHERE THE GHOST RIDER WOULD BE.
THEY'RE GAINING ON US, SHERIFF!
THESE SCUM BUMS DON'T KNOW WHO THEY MESSING WITH.
BREAKER, ONE-NINE. THIS IS DEVIL RIG. HELL-DRIVER. COME ON BACK, SON.
I HEAR YA.
WE JUST CRUISED INTO CHICKASAW COUNTY, OLD BUDDY, AND WE GOT A VAMPIRE ROADBLOCK ON HIGHWAY 9 AND A BRIDGE OUT OVER CHATTAHOOCHEE. IT MIGHT BE TIME TO BACK OFF THE HAMMER, COME ON.
NEGATIVE, DEVIL RIG. KEEP YOUR FOOT HARD ON THE PEDAL.
WE GONNA RIDE THIS SMOKEY STRAIGHT TO HELL.

WHERE EVER THE WORLD HAD RENT AND HELL TRIED TO SQUEEZE ITSELF THROUGH...
ER... I GOT A GOOD CHRISTIAN RAISIN' AND AN EIGHTH-GRADE EDUCATION. AIN'T NO NEED IN YA'LL A TREATIN' ME THIS WAY!
BOOMERANG!
SATURDAY NITE PEARL BRYAN & HER DENTISTS FROM HELL

KRAK
THAT'S IT, YOU GONE AND DONE IT NOW.

IT'S BAD ENOUGH YOU TARETHRASH'N ZOMBIE BUMP IT CHEE IS COMIN' DOWN HERE TRYING TO EAT FOLKS FOR SUPPER...
BUT NOBODY, AND I MEAN NOBODY TOUCHES THE JOKEBOOK WHEN BILLY JOE SHAVER'S PLAYIN'.

YOU UNDEAD BASTARDS ARE ABOUT TO GET A TASTE OF THE PENANCE I'VE

WHERE EVER WICKEDNESS REIGNED...
HOLD YOUR FIRE!
SOMEBODY GO UP THERE AND DRAG THAT BASTARD OUT. HE'S ONLY ONE MAN. AND HE'S OUT OF AMMO.
WHACK
OUT OF AMMO, HUH?
TRUST ME, THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.
WHERE EVER EVIL NEEDED ITS ASS KICKED...

THAT'S WHERE THE GHOST RIDER RODE.
THAT'S WHERE JOHNNY BLAZE RODE WHEN THE HELLFIRE MANTLE WAS HIS.
DANNY KETCH, TOO.
WITH MY GRANDFATHER BY HIS SIDE.
ELDER
THEY DID THEIR BIT TO SAVE MANKIND FROM ITSELF. TO KEEP THE WHOLE WORLD FROM GOING TO HELL. WE ALL DID.
BUT IN THE END...
IT WASN'T ENOUGH.
ZADKIEL HAS CLAIMED THE THRONE OF HEAVEN FOR HIMSELF.
THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE ARE FINISHED.
AND EVERYONE I EVER THOUGHT OF AS FAMILY HAS BEEN MURDERED.

AND ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS FINDING THE MAN WHO KILLED THEM AND CUTTING OUT HIS HEART.
AND THEN SITTING AROUND AND COUNTING THE HOURS UNTIL THE END OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO PRAY TO GOD OR TO CURSE HIM.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ANYMORE.
THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE FORSAKEN.
KRA-THOOM
MARY, MOTHER OF GOD...

WOW. SHE WAS TOTALLY HOT BACK THEN.
SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT.
WHO...
WHO ARE YOU?
THE LAST RIDERS OF
OR OF THIRTY
FROM NOW. TO BE
AND WE
NOSSED OUR WAY HERE TO
AND
YOUR FRONTIE.
WE WERE SENT HERE TO
A MESSAGE
WHAT, BUT...THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I DON'T...
SENT BY WHO?
BY YOU.

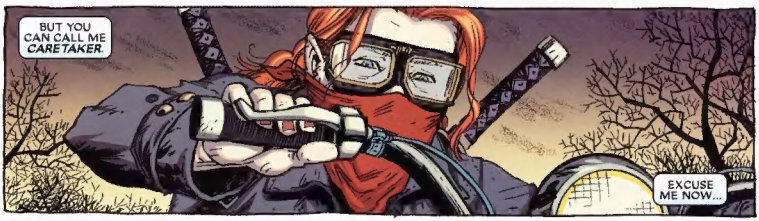
BY... ME?
LISTEN, THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH WE CAN SAY HERE, WITHOUT, YOU KNOW, SPRACKING THE ENTIRE TIMELINE AND ALL.
WE'RE HERE TO TELL YOU NOT TO GIVE UP HOPE.
BUT, ZADKIEL WON.
ZADKIEL MAY HAVE CONQUERED THE GOLDEN CITY, BUT THAT DON'T MAKE HIM GOD.
THE LONGER HE HOLDS THE CITY, THE MORE POWERFUL HE'LL BECOME, BUT THERE'S STILL TIME YOU CAN'T GIVE UP YET.
SO YOU'RE SAYING, WE'LL EVENTUALLY WIN?
WE'RE SAYING, KEEP FIGHTING. YOU CAN'T LET THE LEGACY OF THE GHOST RIDER END HERE.
BUT BLAZE AND KETCH... WE ALL WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS AFTER THE BATTLE.
FIND THEM. THIS IS A BATTLE YOU'LL ALL HAVE TO FIGHT TOGETHER.
WHAT ABOUT THE SKRULLS? SHOULD WE TELL HER ABOUT THE SKRULLS?
HAVE YOU BEEN INVADED BY SKRULLS YET?
STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF, SARA. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.
IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU.
YEAH, NO PRESSURE OR ANYTHING.

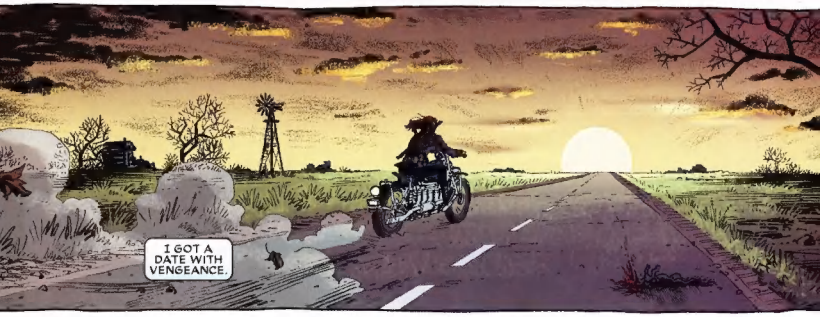
WHERE EVER PEOPLE ARE HOPELESS AND IN DESPAIR...

WHERE EVER IT LOOKS LIKE ALL IS LOST...

THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND THE GHOST RIDER.
THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND *ME*.

MY NAME IS SARA. I'VE BEEN AN ORPHAN AND A NUN AND A SOLDIER OF HEAVEN.


BUT YOU CAN CALL ME *CARETAKER*.
EXCUSE ME NOW...


I GOT A DATE WITH VENGEANCE.

ELSEWHERE...
I'M GUESSING YOU'RE THE BIG GUY THAT ZADKIEL SENT. NICE WORK WITH THE NUNS. WISH I COULDA BEEN IN ON THAT ONE.
THE HARLOTS DID SIT UPON THEIR SCARLET BEAST WITH THEIR CUPS FILLED WITH THE FILTH OF THEIR FORNICATION. THEY WERE DRUNKEN WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS.
YEAH...SO ANYWAY, ZADKIEL WANTS THIS DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ME, I'D RATHER TAKE MY TIME WITH IT, SAVOR IT A BIT, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
BUT EITHER WAY, WE'RE GONNA NEED SOME HELP. SO WHATTA YA THINK...
WHICH OF THESE BASTARDS GETS TO HELP US KILL THE GHOST RIDER?
BLACKHEART
SATANA
CIRCUS OF ECLIPSE
DEADHEAD
MADCAP
DEATHBACK

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